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Pulpit Preaching

VOL. XII, No. 1, JANUARY, 1959

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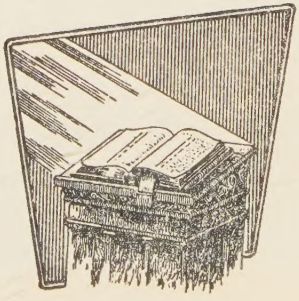


EDITORIAL COMMENTS

This month's themes are "Lenten Pilgrimage" and "Words for Anguished Lives." Next month's emphases will be "Portraits from the Passion" and "Dawn of Life," sermons for Easter.

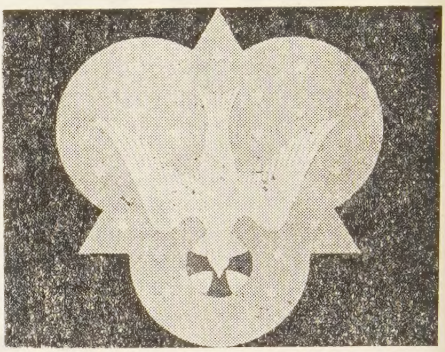
BOOKS FOR PULPIT PREACHING

Charles L. Allen's most recent book, **All Things Are Possible Through Prayer,** contains twenty-four chapters which highlight the manifold approaches to a fuller realization of the transforming possibilities of prayer. The book has many commendable features, the most apparent being the author's persuasive person-to-person manner which leads the reader confidently to a faith in the spiritual opportunities and rewarding achievements which prayer offers. A reader will find here no formal arguments for prayer, but he will sense that prayer is a real force in the author's life and that such a force is a compelling need for any man's discovery of the full life. (Fleming H. Revell Co., 127 pp., $2.)

Atlas of the Early Christian World by F. van der Meer and Christine Mohrmann is an unrivaled survey of the first six centuries of Christianity. Forty-two maps, more than 600 photographs, and a commentary that fairly glows make this huge and beautiful volume an addition of primary importance to the libraries of churches and pastors. (Thomas Nelson & Sons, $15.)

SYMBOLS OF FAITH

Friedrich Rest, United Church of Christ, Evansville, Indiana



THE DESCENDING DOVE

The universal symbol of the Holy Spirit is the dove, possibly because all four Gospel writers refer to the Holy Spirit's descent from heaven (Matt. 3:16; Mark 1:10; Luke 3:22; and John 1:32).

A friend showed me a book he was reading. On the cover was a picture of an ascending, not a descending dove. The Holy Spirit, however, is not a movement of men's spirits toward heaven, but of God's descending search for man. Nowhere in Biblical symbolism is this image reversed.

The work of the Holy Spirit is manifold. The Spirit gives us new birth. "For by one spirit we were all baptized into one body — Jews or Greeks, slaves or free — and all were

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Pulpit Preaching

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Lenten Pilgrimage

BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO BELONG

Maxie D. Dunnam, Gautier Methodist Church, Gautier, Mississippi

And you belong to Christ.—I Corinthians 3:23.

At one time or another most people have been troubled with loneliness. It is practically a universal experience. Psychologists say that the lonely feel that they are "on the outside." The driving passion of the lonely is to "belong." We are driven by the threat of loneliness to find security in the crowd.

Many of us suffer from "the fear of finding oneself alone and so [we] don't find [ourselves] at all," remarks Andre Gide. We seek some way to overcome our loneliness. Indeed, "all man's history is an endeavor to shatter his loneliness," declares Norman Cousins in his essay, "Modern Man Is Obsolete." To dispel this loneliness we often turn to fellowship with others. We seek to belong.

I

All of us sense this need for security, or satisfaction in belonging. It is not found only in the insecure, but also in the "already secure." That is why the typical reaction of people, when they come into contact with a group, is to strive to be accepted as members of that group.

How familiar this is! Often it is even amusing. To the end that we will be accepted we will wear odd bits of clothing, grow sideburns, allow ourselves to be hazed in initiations, repeat verbal rituals, and even persecute persons not members of our group.

We are all aware of this phenomna, are we not? If the leading stylists say the waistlines of women's apparel should be lowered, there is no place for the waistline to go but down! If the famous designers say "sack dresses" are the thing, then they are the thing. Women will wear them, and most men will like them—at least eventually they will insist they like them.

The manufacturers of men's underwear saw how far this kind of "emotion" could go. In a movie Clark Gable pulled off his shirt and young men saw that he did not wear an undershirt. They quit wearing undershirts and the manufacturers suffered a tremendous loss.

Raging like a savage sea, the passion to belong is actually uncontrolled by most people. This longing often causes us to conform and to identify ourself with "off-brand groups," and drives many of us to become "rebels without a cause."

Because this desire to belong is so potent within our lives and because it so frequently has ill-effects, there are those who condemn it. They tell us to restrict it, to quell it, to kill it. The need is not that we suppress or repress this desire, but that we discipline and direct it. The question is, to whom, or to what, must we belong?

St. Paul gives a challenging answer. "All belongs to you," he says, "the world, life, death, the present and the

future—all belongs to you; and you belong to Christ." Here is the eternal satisfaction to our desire to belong. We belong to Christ. "Blessed are those who belong!"

When this discovery grips us, life becomes meaningful and exciting. In such a discovery the words of H. G. Wells take on real meaning: "The Galilean has been too great for our small hearts." This is his judgment in his sweeping one-volume history of the world. Is there not truth here? Our dedication has been too puny and our feeble faith too shallow to keep pace with the great Galilean to whom we belong.

When we become aware of the meaning of our belonging to Christ, our loneliness changes to longing — longing for divine love, and in that we find a creative fellowship.

This is the only ultimate satisfaction for the deep desire of our hearts to belong. Here is Finality that ushers us into a new beginning. The numerous times we have heard it only emphasizes the depth of spiritual truth Augustine probed when these words welled up within his heart: "For Thee were we made, O God, and our hearts are restless until they find rest in Thee." We belong to Christ! When we make this discovery we learn that those who belong are blessed.

II

In this discovery we understand why with the blessedness of our belonging to Christ there comes responsibility and challenge. When we truly belong to Christ we have no right to sin. This is the first challenge.

We belong to Christ because He has redeemed us. We are not our own; we are "bought with a price." This note must never be lost if the music of living is to be complete. Unfortunately, to some degree it has been lost. With a lessening sense of sin, produced often by the psychologists, sociologists, and the modern moralists, the sense of terrific guilt because of sin which makes salvation a necessity has been minimized. Like soft music from a distance this note strikes our ears and hearts only occasionally.

This indifference to sin is caught up in a rather humorous way by an incident in the life of two youngsters. They were playing when little John whacked Paul over the head with a stick. Paul, through his tears, shouted accusingly, "That's a sin!"

"What's a sin?" little John asked.

"An evil deed."

"Has it got teeth?" asked John, puzzled.

"No," replied Paul.

"Has it got claws?"

"No."

"Well," said John with an air of relief, "if it doesn't have teeth and doesn't have claws, I'm not afraid of it." And with that, he whacked Paul with the stick again.

Does this not suggest our misunderstanding of sin? The words of Leslie D. Weatherhead should prick our consciences:

"Sin is what he (Christ) came to smash. What else could he do but hit it as hard as he could? Jesus never pandered to the sloppy views of today by which we deceive ourselves that 'we are all going the same way,' and that 'all will be the same in the end,' as though God were a kind of indulgent grandpa who would meet us at death and pat us all on the head, say to us concerning our sins, 'Well, well, I'm sure you didn't mean it,' give us a bedtime cookie and send us all to heaven."

No! We belong to Christ. We have no right to sin. With penetrating insight G. Ray Jordan has recalled a story which etches this truth upon our hearts and minds. A brilliant though uneducated man, was frankly

admitting his moral lapse to his pastor. The minister exhorted the parishioner to say to the tempter, "Get thee behind me, Satan." "I've said that," was the reply, "but Satan answered, 'It don't make no difference whether I'm in front or behind, if we is going in the same direction!'" It could not have been stated more brilliantly. We walk not in the way of sin when we belong to Christ!

III

Because we have no right to sin, we dare not waste our lives. The poet captured the purposeless folly of many lives in those amusing but poignant words:

There are a number of us who creep
Into this world to eat and sleep,
And know no reason why we're born
But only to consume the corn,
Devour the cattle, flesh and fish,
And leave behind an empty dish.

And if our tombstones when we die
Be not taught to flatter and to lie,
There's nothing better can be said
Than, he's eaten up all his bread,
Drunk up his drink and gone to bed.

This may not be a literary masterpiece but its truth is disturbing when we take it seriously. We were created for a purpose. God's universe operates by purpose and design, and you and I are a part of it. If we accept our responsibility of belonging to Christ, we can do no less than realize and fulfill our destiny.

How often are real purposes forgotten and our lives wasted. The haunting ghosts of neglected aims and distorted goals are our constant visitors. In our negligence we disregard the primary aims and goals and pass over the true purpose of our lives. This is amusingly illustrated by an incident that received wide attention some time ago. In Pittsburgh an ultra-modern post office was built at the staggering cost of $3,000,000.00. When it was completed it was discovered that there was no slot into which one could drop a letter. The very purpose for which it was built, the transportation of letters, was neglected.

Many of us neglect our reason for life and lose the very purpose for which we were created. Like the Prodigal Son, we "waste our substance in riotous living." Our days are spent and our lives wasted. We sell ourselves cheaply in the marketplaces of life.

But such is not our real destiny. We belong to Christ. Our lives are, or should be, a magnificent concerto that moves to a thrilling climax of blessedness. For the Maestro is Christ. Knowing this, we cannot waste our lives. Handel experienced something of the glory of which I speak. He wrote "The Messiah" in little more than three weeks' time. During this period he seemed to be in a world of beauty and creativity that only the sensitive spirit can know. He left food untouched. When Part Two, which contains the "Hallelujah Chorus," was completed, Handel's eyes glistened with tears of joy. The servant, who was near, heard him say, "I did think I did see all heaven before me, and the great God Himself."

This vision can be ours. Heaven opens before us and God is ours when we know that we belong to Christ. For then we cannot waste our lives; we can only give them to the highest that we know.

In such a revelation as this we come to know that not only can we not waste our lives, we are compelled to live at "tip-toe" heights. "Every poem," said Francis Thompson, "is a human sacrifice." This is life at its highest. In his "Festus" Philip James Bailey exclaims, "It matters not how long we live, but how." When we

come under the power of Christ, when we become fully aware of what it means to belong to Him, we are gloriously stricken by the fact that life itself, every moment, is a sacrament unto our Lord.

And often this sacrament is a sacrifice. An unknown British climber who lost his life in the Alps lies in a nameless grave. Although the natives were never able to establish his identity, they paid him a magnificent compliment when they wrote his epitaph: "Died Climbing." This is life at its highest. This is the sacrament that becomes a sacrifice. To this story G. Ray Jordan has added this exciting word: "No matter what happens, we will find life only as we climb. And he who dies climbing never really dies!"

So this is the answer to our loneliness. Here is the satisfaction to our desire to belong. We are blessed because we belong to Christ. In belonging to Him we have no right to sin, to waste our lives, to live short of "tip-toe" heights.

This relationship of the human and the Divine is seen to a marked degree in some earthly relationships. Such a relationship was that of Marian Anderson and her mother. The beauty of Miss Anderson's music brings one to tears. The beauty of her character brings one to his knees. This is the reason Fanny Hurst was prompted to say: "Marian Anderson has not grown simply great; she has grown great simply." **The Reader's Digest** quoted an incident in Miss Anderson's life that shows the depth and purity of her character and the beauty of her relationship to her mother. Sol Hurok, the concert impresario, once told Billy Rose that he was present when reporters were interviewing the great contralto. They asked her to name the greatest moment in her life. Hurok knew, relates Billy Rose, that she had many to choose from. "There was the night Toscanini told her that hers was the finest voice of the century. There was the private concert she gave at the White House for the Roosevelts and the King and Queen of England. She had received the $10,000 Bok award as the person who had done most for her home town, Philadelphia. To top it all, there was the Easter Sunday in Washington when she stood beneath the Lincoln statue and sang for a crowd of 75,000, which included Cabinet members, Supreme Court justices, and most members of Congress." "Which of these moments did Marian choose?" Billy Rose asked. "None of them," replied the impresario. "Miss Anderson told the reporter that the greatest moment in her life was the day she went home and told her mother she wouldn't have to take in washing any more."

If this magnificent relationship can exist between mother and daughter how much more magnificent our relationship to Christ! We belong to Him. We have no right to sin. We have no right to waste our lives. We are compelled to live at "tip-toe" heights.

NO THANKS, GOD!

John M. Meister, First Presbyterian Church, Fort Wayne, Indiana

He was in the world . . . , yet the world knew him not. He came to his own home, and his own people received him not.—John 1:10-11.

One of the intriguing questions which often arises in bull sessions on religion goes like this: If we grant the church's claim that a person must believe in Christ in order to find eternal life, then what happened to those

millions and millions of people who inhabited the earth before the time of Christ?

A variation of the same question goes like this: If we grant the necessity of belief in Christ, then what happens to the countless millions in the world who through the absence of civilization or the presence of censorship cannot possibly hear about Jesus of Nazareth?

This question, whatever the variation of theme, is intended to stump the experts. And there is no point in denying it is a fit question. Jesus is quoted as saying, "I am the way . . . ; no one comes to the Father, but by me." That plainly gives the church cause to insist "there is no other name . . by which men may be saved." On the other hand, it is equally plain that millions of people live and die who through no fault of their own never hear the name of Jesus. Is God so capricious that he damns all those millions? Can God be so unfair?

John's Perspective

People who raise this question must not be acquainted with the opening paragraphs of the Gospel according to John. This gospel begins by identifying Jesus of Nazareth with the eternal activity of God and with the invisible world of reality. Jesus is the supreme expression in flesh of the same Divine Intention or Divine Idea which brought the world and all things that are into being. He is the supreme expression in flesh of the invisible world of Goodness and Truth and Love – which is ultimately the only real world and of which the things of earth are only so many shadows or imperfect reflections.

It becomes plain that here the Gospel is drawing a distinction between Jesus as a Man and Christ as the Eternal Intention of God. Jesus as a man of flesh did not exist from the time of creation and does not exist now. Jesus of Nazareth lived out a normal life span in a specific generation in Palestine. But Christ as the expressed Intention or Mind of God does exist eternally though invisibly. He was in the beginning, is now and ever more shall be. He is the Alpha and the Omega – the "A" and the "Z" – the Beginning and the End.

I

With so much for background, let us now notice what the Gospel according to John has to say about the life-giving efforts and the saving activity of God.

First, the Christ-Spirit which found his perfect human dwelling place in the life of Jesus of Nazareth has been and is forever and everywhere in the world.

This Gospel puts it like this: The Christ-Spirit was in the beginning – was with God and was God. All things were made and are sustained through him. In him is this mystical something we call "life" – which is the inner "light" and which enlightens in some measure every man. To be sure, this Christ-Spirit does not merely "exist" in the world but is always engaged in dynamic activity – activity which is opposed and seemingly threatened by forces which manifest opposite qualities. Life struggles against Death. Creation struggles against Chaos. Truth struggles against Falsehood. In short, the Christ-Spirit is in the world as light surrounded by darkness, but just as all the darkness in the world cannot smother the light of a tiny candle, so the aggressive forces of evil opposition within the created order have never overcome the dynamic Christ-Spirit.

John's Gospel is not alone in recognizing the universal presence of the Christ-Spirit. St. Paul, who certainly stressed the exclusive claims of Christ, never limited his presence to the life of Jesus. He says explicitly: 'Ever

since the creation of the world (God's) invisible nature . . . has been clearly perceived in the things that have been made. So (men) are without excuse." The Westminster Confession of Faith begins by saying that "the lights of nature, and the works of creation and providence do so far manifest the goodness, wisdom and power of God as to leave men inexcusable."

But we need not press the argument, especially by means of quoting other men. Eyes that see easily recognize the presence of God wherever they look. If we look outward or upward we see God in the beauty of forest, field and stream; in the faithfulness of seed-time and harvest; in the steadiness of the stars and the rhythm of the tides; in the silent daily march of the sun across the sky; and in the laugh of a little child.

If we look inward we see God. To be sure, we see ourselves — but then we are seeing what we are most ashamed of. We see other people, for we are a part of all whom we have met. But when we attempt to explain ourselves we see God. How else do we explain the presence of conscience, the power to think, the possession of memory? How else do we explain the "life" that keeps our cells growing and our blood running? How else do we explain the conviction that an Unseen Hand rests upon our shoulder to direct and to restrain and to hold us up?

If we look backward we see God. We discern his doing in our own lives — the way he has steered our little craft whenever we have permitted him and the way he has redeemed our mistakes when we turn away from our disobedience. We discern his doings in the life of nations. The historian (Froude) was right when he said, "The one sure lesson of history is that righteousness works to man's well-being and sin to his undoing."

Surely John is right: "He was in the world." He is in the world! And men who fail to see him are without excuse.

II

So far so good. But that is not the end of the matter. The world has also generally rejected Christ. So far from recognizing and accepting the usual pattern has been either blindness or rejection with a hearty, "No thanks, God!"

John is absolutely right when he says, "Yet the world knew him not."

The story of the human race is the sad story of the stubborn, suicidal rebellion of the creature against the Creator. To be sure, there has always been a remnant of souls who have recognized the Christ-Spirit, so that he has never been totally without a witness in the world. Some have recognized him dimly and from afar, like Abraham and Moses. Some have recognized him with an uncanny brilliance, like Jeremiah or Isaiah. But the great parade of men across the stage of history has groped unseeingly and unfeelingly through their pathetic little parts.

As John put it, the Christ-Spirit "came to his own home" — that is to say, to the people of Israel, the community whom God had prepared through many costly years precisely to behold the Christ in the world — and even "his own people received him not."

If even these people whom God had chosen and prepared to recognize and obey Christ could not discern him, what hope is there for the world? "He came to his own home and his own people received him not." The one who wrote these words must have felt as Winston Churchill felt in one of his last speeches before the

House of Commons when speaking of the implications of nuclear weapons. He said: "Which way shall we turn? I find it poignant to look at youth in all its activities and ardor and most of all to watch little children playing their merry games, and wonder what would lie before them if God wearied of mankind."

Fortunately for us, God did not and does not weary. He is Love that will not let us go. As Paul put it in his hymn of praise to the Spirit of Christ: "Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things."

One thing more such Love could do — and this thing it did. It finally found expression in one solitary Human Life. "The Word became flesh." This Spirit who existed eternally in the form of God actually took the form of a servant. He humbled himself. Love "stooped to conquer"! He became obedient even unto death on a cross.

And ever since those of us who have beheld the Eternal Christ in a likeness like our own have been utterly without excuse if we do not recognize him for what he is and obey him as he demands.

III

We are now able to consider the question with which we began in a new and different perspective. What happened to those who lived before the Advent of Jesus? They received life, as the Scriptures plainly indicate, in proportion to their ability to recognize Life. They were judged on the basis of the light given them. Which makes the matter an issue between God and each of them individually — remembering that God is just only because he is also merciful. But in any case this question is for us academic — unrelated to us personally (for we did not live before the advent of Jesus) — and is really a dodge from the more basic question.

What happens to those who live today without any knowledge of the revelation of God in Jesus? Much the same answer applies but with the difference that we are under obligation to enable them to learn of this revelation. We would not think of discovering penicillin and then keeping it as a monopoly for our own life-saving purposes. How much more immoral is it to keep to ourselves the life-giving Spirit of Christ as we have found him in Jesus of Nazareth? All the truly good things we have in life derive from him. By what right can we make them our monopoly on the flimsy excuse that "other people like the religion they have"?

But this question is really proper when we turn it upon ourselves. We do know about Christ in Jesus of Nazareth. Do we accept him or, like those Israelites of old, say, "No thanks, God! We like our stupid way of doing things."

Maxwell Anderson in his play, "Wingless Victory," presents a young sea captain who sailed from Salem, Massachusetts about the year 1800. When he returned seven years later he returned not only with his ship laden with riches from the Far East but also with his lovely wife, a princess from Malay. He expected a heart-warming reception from his relatives and friends but received instead a cold and forbidding welcome. Although his wife had abandoned her former superstitions and tribal customs, and had embraced her husband's Christian faith, the townspeople greeted her with a wall of racial prejudice, religious intolerance and social cruelty. They kept her out of their circle and refused to accept her as one of their own.

She finally broke under the strain and decided to end her own life. As

the bitter tragedy closes and the curtain falls upon the last act she cries, "God of the children, god of the lesser children of the earth, the black, the unclean, the vengeful, you are mine now as when I was a child. He came too soon, this Christ of peace; men are not ready yet."

The only right version of our question is this: Am I ready to accept Christ in this Nazarene who will not let me go? Or has he come too soon — for me? We live after the advent of Jesus and we have heard of him. Have we recognized the Christ-Spirit in him? If we have, then that Christ-Spirit is the Lord of our life. More than that, he is our life. To recognize Jesus for what he is is to be "in Christ" and to have "Christ in us." As Paul put it, "For me to live is Christ." Is it that way with us?

MASTERY FROM THE MASTER

Edward W. Stimson, Dundee Presbyterian Church, Omaha, Nebraska

I can do all things in Him who strengthens me—Philippians 4:13.

Do you have what life takes? Do you greet each new day with assurance that nothing will happen which you cannot find resources to meet? Have you learned the secrets of the mastery of life?

Life has become much more complex than it was for our fathers. The strains of modern living grow apace. The insecurity and the tempo of our times have increased the hazards for human personality. Like a flaw in a piece of steel which never shows until the metal has been placed under repeated stress, minor personality deficiencies are aggravated and become serious under the wear and tear of twentieth century living. Some people come apart at the seams and go to pieces under the tension. Others seek for release and escape in a dozen unworthy ways. They cannot face the guilt and frustration, the fears and the feelings of futility that beat upon them.

Many are asking: "Is it possible to take life in our hands, and fashion it for triumph despite the pressures that bear upon us?" "Can we manage ourselves even when circumstances seem to be the arbiters of our destiny?" "Can a man be the master of his fate?"

In answer to these questions we hear Paul, out of his Christian experience, saying to his friends at Philippi, "I can do all things in Him who strengthens me." Mastery from the Master of us all! Here is the promise of the real answer to our quest.

I

The mastery of life is primarily a matter of self-mastery. The sages of India have a saying, "He who can master himself can control the world." Louis the XIV, King of France from 1643 to 1715, and one of the strong men of history who learned by bitter experience, said, "There is little that can withstand a man who can conquer himself." The Bible puts it this way, "He that ruleth his own spirit is better than he that taketh a city."

A successful but unhappy man went to his pastor with this question. "Why is it I can manage my business so well, and at the same time I cannot manage my own life?" Of course the answer was that it is infinitely easier to manage a business than it is to manage yourself. Alexander the Great was master of all he surveyed. He ruled the world, but he never succeeded in mastering himself, and died in a drunken brawl.

The business man revealed that in all the close personal relations of his life he was having trouble. He was no

getting along with his wife, and did not know how to deal with his children. He was tense, miserable and irritable. He had been accustomed to blaming others for these difficulties. He admitted that he was becoming an alcoholic. Since he was successful in business, he was at first ready to assume that his failure at home was not his fault. If he got along well at the office, made money, and was respected in the business community, the trouble at home must be the fault of his family. Success in one area should automatically guarantee success in the other if the people in the one place were reasonable like the people in the other. So he blamed his wife and children for his tension, his alcoholism, his conflicts. How to get him to realize that his own tyranny, his selfishness, his confidence that he knew better than anyone else in the family, were the sources of his trouble?

Fortunately he finally did what he would do in business: he called for specialized help. If something had gone as wrong in his business he would long since have called in an efficiency expert or a research analyst. Now he finally asked for outside help with his family situation, and was willing to be led to see where the trouble was in his own life — that he was ruled by a dated emotion, a hangover from his childhood. In his home his mother had been the general manager in a large way, ruling everybody in the household imperiously. He did not know it, but his hostility to his mother had turned into a powerful determination to be master of his own household, so he was trying to repeat the tyranny of his own childhood experience. He had to have help to master his own childish dated emotion.

Our first step toward the mastery of life is taken when we are willing to face the problem within our own selves, where, happily, we may deal with it. So long as the ineffective workman explains his failure by complaining, "The foreman had it in for me," he cannot be helped. So long as the lazy student says he flunked, "because my chemistry teacher did not like me," he won't change. So long as the spoiled child explains the fact that the neighborhood children pick on him by claiming they are roughnecks, he will remain unliked and unwanted. So long as a neglected wife only blames her husband, she is not beginning to solve her problem.

Don't Blame Circumstances

A second preliminary realization must be that we are responsible despite circumstances. Abraham Lincoln once explained the character of a village scoundrel by saying, "He's got the can't-help-its." The man was forever blaming his behavior on things over which he had no control. Circumstances were against him. His parents hadn't brought him up right. He was the victim of his heredity and his environment.

The world is full of people who have the "can't-help-its." They excuse themselves by saying they did the only thing they could. "Under the circumstances, I could not do anything else." A politician under pressure approves a policy he believes to be wrong, but says, "Under the circumstances I had to vote for it." A man fights with his wife and says, "Under the circumstances, how could I help it?" Another resorts to unethical behavior in business, and salves his conscience by telling himself, "Under the circumstances, I could not do anything else." Joseph Wood Krutch estimates that nine-tenths of the people in the world think they are what they are and do what they do because of circumstances and social pressures. But he observes that

Henry Thoreau, discouraged, frustrated and dissatisfied with himself, went away to Walden Pond and found himself with two basic questions that should concern us all: Am I the way I am because of circumstances? Or are circumstances my master because of me?

Granted that circumstances affect our lives — we cannot escape them. But different people react to the same circumstances in different ways. The sidewalks of New York raise up both character and corruption. Small towns, with their limitations, rear both little men with little minds and big men with big minds. The Apostle Paul said, "I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content. I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound; in any and all circumstances I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and want. I can do all things in Him who strengthens me." Before we can master life we must accept responsibility for ourselves.

II

But this is only half of the truth. The other half is that we cannot do it alone. We need help. We are responsible, but we cannot master ourselves. The human predicament was expressed by a small boy who had been spanked, who tearfully asked his mother, "Mom, how do you make yourself do what you ought to do?"

The minute we accept responsibility for ourselves we find it is too much for us. We have passions and desires which sneak up on us, and we yield to them and lose self-control. We may face long coddled and ingrained habits which are hard to break. We are the scene of inner conflicts like internal civil wars. The good that we would we do not, and the evil that we would not, we still practice. We see how it would be fine to live a life of unselfish love, very patient, very kind, knowing no jealousy, making no parade, never rude, never selfish, never irritated, never resentful, not critical but encouraging, full of patience, hope and faith, the life of real Christian love — but we say, "That would be fine, but it just isn't me!"

And here we have to take a second look at the last half of our text. Paul doesn't say he can do all things by himself. He says, "I can do all things in Christ, in him who strengthens me."

This is where Christianity differs from all the mere self-help psychologies. There is some truth in the practices of auto-suggestion that use positive affirmations for the automotive power of ideas. For awhile we gain some benefit by the elimination of negative thoughts and the assuring of ourselves that we are daily getting better, but this does not tap the deeper resources of strength from beyond ourselves.

We Christians know that by faith in Jesus Christ we are in vital touch with a pervasive personal spiritual Power which supplements our own strength of body, mind and spirit as we yield ourselves to Him.

Once, in a hotel in Switzerland, a mother was sending her little girl into the lounge room after lunch each day to practice her piano lesson on the hotel lounge piano. The practicing was so monotonous and full of discords that the hotel guests got very weary of listening to it. They were too polite to complain, but when she started to practice, the lounge room and lobby would suddenly become mysteriously deserted.

But one day there came from the lounge room the most beautiful harmonies they had ever heard. Curious and incredulous, the guests started back to see what could have transformed that awkward child into

musical prodigy. A strange sight met their eyes. Josef Hoffman, the great pianist, had, incognito, been taking a rest cure at the hotel. For days he had watched the little girl, and had seen the guests depart. With a sudden impulse he had gone to the child's side, seated himself beside her on the piano bench, and as she strummed with her two fingers, the great musician, with delicate touch and infinitely beautiful expression, was lifting her childish theme into his own magnificent improvisation. The child's face was beaming with pride as the strong vibrant hands of the great musician played over her small, feeble fingers, transforming her awkward touch into music that lifted that crowd up as they stood peering into the room with hushed hearts.

When they finished and the people crowded in to express their thanks, Hoffman, with the humility of true dignity, replied, "It is this little lady you must thank for any pleasure you may have derived from the music." So it is with us and Christ!

Ralph Waldo Emerson expressed it in the words:

> The passive Master lent his hand
> To the vast soul that o'er him planned.

And Roland Hayes, the great tenor, said he made these words his life motto: "I mean that I give my vocal chords, my body, my soul over to God who gave me my voice, and I say to Him, 'Sing through me. Help me to forget myself and to remember that I am only an instrument for you to sing through.'"

And Lincoln, in the Civil War days, when Stanton asked him why he did not worry more, replied, "When a man feels that he is only a pipe for Omnipotence to sound through he doesn't worry much."

I learned this long ago, when I was a lad in the university. I had been filled with frustration, uneasiness and the tension of indecision, rejecting the call of God for my life, until one night I surrendered, and told Him to use me as He willed. Then came peace and power. I could do double what I could before with far less effort. My senior year was a divinely empowered dream, and ever since, wherever I have gone, He has given me wisdom and strength not my own for whatever task He has called me to do.

III

To find the secret of life-mastery we need a Master. We cannot just say to ourselves, "Come now, I will be masterful." Anyone who tries that will only be silly or obnoxious. To be masterful in ruling and marshalling the resources of our own inner lives and securing the help of the power that infuses the universe we must yield our hands to Him, and let him overplay our faltering attempts with the majestic harmonies of His infinite providential plan. Jesus Christ in the flesh did this perfectly. We, following Him, are mastered by His living Spirit still. He makes us able to accept full responsibility for life, and do more than our best. We are saved from smug pride because His is the glory, even as He remakes us and uses us gloriously.

BE A CHRIST

Clarence Edward Macartney, Former Minister, First Presbyterian Church, Pittsburgh, Pa.

Until Christ be formed in you.—Galatians 4:19.

W. C. Stead was a great figure in the journalistic world forty years ago. He was one of the notable persons who perished at sea when the Titanic

went down on that April night in 1912. One of the survivors saw him as he stood alone at the edge of the deck in silence, and what seemed to be a prayerful attitude, or one of profound meditation. Stead was a courageous reformer, and in one of his campaigns in London to protect young girls and to raise the "age of consent," he was arrested and convicted on some technical charge in connection with his campaign in the lower world, and was sentenced to prison. On Christmas day he had been writing a letter to a reclaimed girl encouraging her to stand fast and be a Christian. He was in the organ loft of the chapel prison and was looking down on the 600 prisoners when he heard a voice, "Why are you telling that girl to be a Christian? Never tell anyone again to be a Christian. Always tell them to be a Christ."

Stead said that his mind revolted at the thought, and he said to himself, "What blasphemy to tell anyone to be a Christ!" But again that insistent voice said to him, "Always tell them to be a Christ." The more he thought about it the more it impressed him. Afterwards he wrote to Manning, Hugh Price Hughes, Benjamin Waugh, and others high in the Christian life of England, and all but one answered him to the effect that to be a Christ contained the essence of the Christian religion.

At first hearing this may shock you as it did William T. Stead when the words came to him out of the unseen there in the chapel of the dismal English prison. How could we tell anyone to be a Christ! Christ is the Ancient of Days, the Son of Man, the Son of God, our Mediator, Redeemer, our Judge and our King. How absurd, then, we say at first, and how sacrilegious to tell one to be a Christ. But when we say today "Be a Christ" we assume, of course, those great and sublime truths about the person of Christ, His Deity, His Mediatorship, and His Kingship. We confess, too, that after we have done our best to follow in His steps, we are but unprofitable servants and need and must have the redeeming work of our Lord and Saviour. Christ is alone and unapproachable in the glory of His person and in the majesty of His work upon the Cross.

All this we reverently believe and take for granted. But at the same time there is this other and important side of Christian life and doctrine. It is strikingly set forth in that phrase which the English journalist heard on that Christmas day in the organ loft of the prison chapel, "Be a Christ." When you think of it, the same thing is spoken by the Holy Spirit in the Scriptures. Perhaps the most arresting instance of that is what Paul says here to the Christian disciples at Galatia. He was in great distress of mind and heart because of a threatened decline from the faith among these people and lest they be tempted and seduced to believe on "another Christ," which is not another and has no power to save. He resorts to every weapon of the speaker and the writer, righteous anger, irony, pathos and apostrophe. Here with great affection and earnestness he says, "My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you."

"Until Christ be formed in you." What does that amount to but that Christ can be formed in the heart of man? "Until Christ be formed in you!" Remember this was said by Paul, the man who so exalted the person and office of Christ, describing Him as the image of the invisible God, and the first born of every creature, the Creator of all things in heaven and in earth, before all

things, and by whom all things consist, and in whom dwelleth the fullness of the Godhead bodily. Remember this was said by Paul, and in this very letter where he prays for these Galatians that Christ may be formed in them he lays down those great truths of redemption which are the charter of Christian liberty and which more than any other writings in the Bible teach the doctrine of salvation by faith alone. Yet it is Paul who says, "Till Christ be formed in you." This, then, is the exceeding high aim and goal, the heroic enterprise, the ceaseless warfare of the Christian, "Be a Christ."

I

Here we have the high and lofty Christian thought of man. Christianity teaches the irrefragible truth of original sin and of the fall of man. This is a truth affirmed by common sense and logic and reinforced by the indisputable facts of man's life and history. To this fact the woes and wars and sorrow of our world bear sad and powerful witness. Psychology tries to frighten us by telling us about man's subsurface mind and all the dreadful motives and desires and reflexes that are there. But long ago Christ told us about the heart of man, that it is desperately wicked and deceitful above all else. He said it was not the things that went into a man that defiled him but the things that came out of his heart, and that out of the heart proceed murders, adulteries, and all wicked things. Yet it was Christ, who knew what was in man, who at the same time had such a sublime conception of man's nature that He said to men, "Be perfect," and again, "The Kingdom of God is within you." It was Christ who took upon Him man's nature and who on the Cross offered up His life for man's salvation. The incarnation of the Son of God in human nature was, of course, unique and peculiar. Yet that incarnation of God in man set the seal on the sacredness of man's nature. It is a forever inspiring intimation of the dignity of man's life, of his capacity, of his destination. Reverently let it be said that the incarnation of God in Christ shows that men are capable of an incarnation, of becoming Christlike, of having Christ, as Paul put it, formed within them. So long as we hold to that high view of Christian man, human hope cannot expire or perish from the earth. How beautiful the thought that Christ saw possible incarnation, a forming of Himself, even in publicans, in thieves, and in harlots! When we say then, "Be a Christ," we are not talking to an educated or developed beast. I cannot conceive of either Christ or Paul speaking to such a creature and telling them to have Christ formed within them; but I can conceive of the incarnation for the sake of a man created in the image of God, but now through sin fallen from it; and I can conceive of St. Paul writing to these disciples on the windswept plains of Galatia, and saying to them, "Until Christ be formed in you."

II

When we ask ourselves just what this means to have Christ formed in us, the simple and natural answer is that it means to be Christ-like. Christ told men, "Follow Me," and Paul said, "Follow me even as I follow Christ." To have Christ formed within us is to follow Christ and to do His will. How severely, too, Christ spoke of those whose views of His Lordship were correct, and who said to Him, "Lord, Lord," but were anything but Christlike in their life and who failed to do His will! Not those who said, "Lord, Lord," but those who followed Him and did His will should enter the Kingdom of Heaven.

About the turn of the century, a

Kansas preacher wrote a book which was an immediate sensation, and had an almost unprecedented circulation. The title of the book was this, "What would Jesus Do?" The book purported to describe the attempt of a man to do in every circumstance and condition of life, what he thought Jesus would do under like circumstances. This attempt, of course, led the man into some beautiful and difficult and dangerous experiences. It was a fine piece of imagination. There may be times when the path of Christian duty is not clear. But suppose that you could get all the members of all our churches and all our statesmen and rulers to do every day in their personal relationships and in the discharge of their respective offices what they gather from the New Testament Jesus would have done under similar circumstances? What a transformed world we would have!

What would Jesus do? And what was that book and that title but the echo of a much more famous and enduring book, "The Imitation of Christ" by Thomas a Kempis. And the book of Thomas a Kempis is only an echo of what Christ's disciple, Peter, wrote of Him, "Leaving us an example that we should follow in His steps." Here is one of the memorable passages, a golden leaf from the pages of "The Imitation of Christ": "Who so followeth me walketh not in darkness, saith the Lord. These are the words of Christ by which we are admonished to imitate His life and manners, if we will be truly enlightened and delivered from all bondage of our hearts."

When we think of the Christlike life and the spirit of Christ, we think of purity, and patience, and kindness, and pity, and comfort and sympathy, of helping and giving to others. It is rather a beautiful tribute to Christianity that when we talk about the "Christian spirit" we mean the spirit of forgiveness. In Seeley's paraphrase of the Book of Genesis, God said, "Let there be light and there was forgiveness." In his great judgment scene how closely Christ identified Himself with the sick and the suffering, the naked, the hungry and the prisoner. And however that judgment scene is interpreted, and to whatever dispensation in the ages of redemption it belongs, it must ever be remembered that here it was not what men said or claimed, but what they had done to Him in the person of the sick, the prisoner, the hungry and the naked. That was the test.

But this passive, or perhaps benevolent, side of the Christian life is not all, nor indeed is it the most difficult. Christ on one occasion looked around Him in anger. He was capable of righteous indignation. He denounced hypocrisy, denounced wickedness in high places, denounced men who made long prayers and robbed widows and orphans, denounced unfilial children, who by a technicality of religious ritual, excused themselves from their duty to their parents. He denounced evil thoughts as well as evil deeds, and pronounced the judgment of God upon those who defiled the purity of marriage.

This side of the Christian life is more difficult than the other. When you follow Christ there, when that kind of a Christ is formed within you it will bring adversaries and opposition, and sometimes persecution. Remember it was not His words of sympathy, or His miracles of kindness and compassion which brought Christ to the Cross, but His opposition to evil. Who can follow Christ there? What would Christ say of the liquor traffic, or the wholesale destruction of homes by the breaking of the marriage vow, of the sexual looseness of the age under the guise o

progress and liberty? What would He say of a government that leaves God out? It takes courage to follow Christ in this way; and yet that courage is the proof of Christ within us. It was not when they saw their compassion or pity, or their prayers, but when they saw their boldness that the people of Jerusalem concluded that Peter and John and the other apostles had been with Christ.

III

A being who is capable of having Christ formed within him was not made for the grave. "Dust to dust" has no application to him. That was what Paul thought about the matter when he said in his splendid way, "Christ in you the hope of glory." Like that! A Christlike life is both the hope and the proof of an eternal life. Who has not felt this when he has stood by the body or the grave of a godly, Christlike father or mother, or friend, or servant of God. Death does not seem to apply there at all. Where men have lived godless, selfish, and faithless lives, there let death set up his throne and his altar and dress it with such terrors as he has at his command; but over the faithful and believing Christian, over the Christlike life, he has no power, no dominion. Christ in you the hope of glory; the hope of immortal life, of rising to stand by the side of the saints of God, of living as long as God Himself shall live, and with God and with Christ. "O Death, where is thy sting! O Grace, where is thy victory!"

Be a Christ! Be a Christ in patience, in kindness, in sympathy, in prayerfulness, in love, in resistance to that which is wrong, in struggling for the coming of the Kingdom, in resistance to temptation, in the struggle for purity of soul.

WORTH QUOTING

E. Paul Hovey, Congregational-Presbyterian Federated Church, Lewiston, Idaho

Personal life is at a discount today. People work keenly, putting everything into their work, but many complain that their personal life is barren; so that one wonders why women who do not have to work have such a strong urge to do it. It almost seems that work has come to have a value that is unreal, and we take it as a drug, exciting and deadening. Women drive themselves when they are not driven by necessity, and everyone insists upon being exhausted. It is disturbing to see women so caught by activity, for the individual bond that used to matter most to women is a quality that is now doubly precious. The devotion we have all seen in woman makes one dare to say that as she tends to half relinquish her personal role, moving out into the impersonal world and allowing society to do what she was given by nature to do, we are almost faced with being contained in the crowd as a substitute for being loved.—Florida Scott-Maxwell in "The Greatness of the Task."

* * *

Every church has . . . those timid souls who insist that they will give but cannot make a pledge. Some even intimate that there is something religious in relying upon unpledged contributions.

Our contention is that the direct contrary is true. A pledge is more than a gift. It is an expression of confidence in the program which is planned. Through it the individual says that he is willing to share in the work that is being planned. He is identifying himself with the project and giving a "clear ahead" signal for the year.

A pledge is much more an act of Christian faith than giving as the Spirit may move. The emotional giver contributes as he finds the money available. The individual who makes a pledge agrees to so organize his life that there will be money available to meet the obligations when due. Givers may help the church treasury; pledgers definitely increase the morale.—Church Management.

* * *

A minister recently expressed himself this way, "Lack of money still pours in." A survey of churches found that . . . 1/3 of the people in any given church give regularly, 1/3 give occasionally and the remaining 1/3 contribute nothing . . . What disturbs . . . is that the above Pattern of Giving hasn't changed appreciably during the last 30 years, even in boom times.—E. J. Meurer.

* * *

God talks of Jesus Christ as the new reality. How then shall I talk? I am not worried if I let God talk. We talk best when Christ speaks to us and in us and beyond us. For them our lives take on a new creativity.

—Calvin Sutherlin.

* * *

The secret of charm is emotional directness. It consists in direct emotional communication with others . . . with total honesty, with sincerity, with deep concern, and without guile.

—William James.

* * *

One sign of maturity is the ability to be comfortable with people who are not like us.—Virgil A. Kraft.

* * *

No fairer or finer prospectus for any journey into our contemporary world could be formulated than that given by Zona Gale in the sentences which she calls her social creed: "I am determined to increase the area of my awareness." That doesn't sound much like a creed. That's the beauty of it. Too many start out with a ringing "I believe." Such an affirmation ought to be the end of a process of thought rather than the beginning. A really vital creed is nothing but the conclusion of a process of enlarged awareness. It begins with experience. To begin with a creed, religious, scientific, or economic, is merely to acquire a set of brittle dogmas which rattle around in the mind like marbles in a bag, with no growing room to touch experience.—Halford E. Luccock.

* * *

The Christmas legends ought to teach us that if we are to find God anywhere, and get new insights into life through communion with him, we shall have to do it as we go about our common tasks . . . Too often we try to separate the secular and the sacred. The temple of worship and the temple of work are not to be separated.—Herbert W. Hansen.

* * *

At birthdays and Christmas seasons you prepare surprises for the children and those you love. You smuggle things into the house. You keep them locked away. You guard your secret well. And then, when the happy morning comes, you bring out the thing you have prepared, a glad, loving surprise. Is not that what the great Father of heaven does times without number for his children? And is not half the magic of life, just this, that it is so full of the thrill of discovery — and all because a God of love is going on before?—James S. Stewart.

* * *

Only a very small portion of mankind can ever see Bethlehem, thus it is necessary and it is possible for each one . . . to build his own Bethlehem. Each one of us must have a place in his heart for the Christ-child. The incarnation is not an isolated event of

history. Birth of Christ did not happen only in Bethlehem. It happens every time any newborn soul opens its life to the gentleness, the kindness and the regenerating power of Jesus Christ. Do not shut your heart, do not close the doors of your inn. Let him in.—George Mecklenburg.

* * *

Sin is anything that separates us from God. If we are so good that we don't feel any need for God's mercy, then our goodness is sin.—Alexander Purdy.

* * *

We often are relieved of the necessity to strain ourselves when our apparent opportunities seem beyond our powers. We can relax and stay put in good conscience.

Our experience often is a reflection of the mood of Hans Castorp in "The Magic Mountain" . . . when he learned he had a slight touch of tuberculosis . . . he felt as he had in school as a boy when he had been told "he would not be promoted; therefore, no further effort had to be made the remainder of the term." . . .

Our willingness to relax in the face of challenge is a serious hazard in our time, as Czeslaw Milosz notes in his book, "The Captive Mind." He observes pointedly that the rise of Communism has been in exact proportion to man's loss of faith in himself and in God.

More and more people everywhere are haunted by the feeling that they are victims of social forces and therefore can do nothing to change anything. The result is that man becomes nothing because he has persuaded himself he is exactly that. Unfortunately, once we have persuaded ourselves we are nothing we are likely to accept anything even though it may be bad. We are defeated, however, not by external conditions, but rather by our own self-doubt. Nine times out of ten we can deal with difficulties on the roads we travel and with tangled human relations if we venture with faith in ourselves and God.

—Harold Blake Walker

* * *

God does not look kindly on us when we take advantage of Him. The job, the work, the toil still has to be done.—Edward Mooney.

* * *

A teacher effects eternity; he can never tell where his influence stops.

—Henry Adams

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We are not punished for our sins, but by them.—Elbert Hubbard.

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Real difficulties can be overcome; it is only the imaginary ones that are unconquerable.—Theodore N. Vail.

* * *

Shall we make a new rule of life from tonight; always to try to be a little kinder than is necessary.

—James M. Barrie

* * *

We receive love — from our children as well as others — not in proportion to our demands or sacrifices or needs, but roughly in proportion to our own capacity to love.—Rollo May.

* * *

In this world, there is always danger for those who are afraid of it.

—Bernard Shaw

* * *

Man is born to live not to prepare for life. Life itself, the phenomenon of life, the gift of life, is so breathtakingly serious!"—Boris Pasternak.

* * *

Life is never a material, a substance to be molded . . . life is the principle of self-renewal, it is constantly renewing and remaking and changing and transfiguring itself, it is infinitely beyond your or my obtuse theories about it.—Boris Pasternak.

GLENN E. HANNEMAN
DONALD MACLEOD
CLARENCE J. FORSBERG

Words for Anguished Lives

WHEN JESUS MAKES YOU NERVOUS

Glenn E. Hanneman, First Baptist Church, Los Angeles, California

All the city came out to meet Jesus; and when they saw Him, they begged Him to leave their neighborhood.—Matthew 8:34.

If you thought Jesus were standing nearby while you completed a business transaction with a customer, would it make you nervous? If He were standing at your side while you were being asked to assume responsibility in the work of His kingdom, would it make any difference in your answer? If you thought of Him present and sharing in your hours of recreation, or in the moment when you passed by a man in need, if He were looking with you at a person who was destroying his life by sordid indulgence, or listening with you to vicious words about another, would it make any difference in what you did?

In a recent play, a man who identified himself as an inspector from the Police Department drops in on a very respectable family just as they have completed their dinner. He reports that a young woman has committed suicide. Then, with member after member of this particular family, he proceeds to demonstrate how all of them are implicated in this unhappy event: the father by the fact that he had dismissed her from his factory a couple of years earlier; the daughter by having had her discharged as a sales person because of some slight irritation a few weeks before at a fashionable shop; the mother by refusing the assistance of her charity organization; and so on around the family. There is nothing left to do but for each to confess his guilt. It is indeed a pitiful scene they present. After the inspector has left, however, one of the family decides to find out what's behind all this. He calls the Police Department, and finds that no such inspector has been employed there. He calls the morgue only to learn that there has been no suicide case in many months. A wave of relief passes over these people, as you can well imagine. But the fact remains, as the daughter discerns, that whether any immediate tragedy has occurred or not, each of them has been guilty of doing exactly that of which their unknown visitor accused them. The play doesn't tell us who the inspector was; nor is that question important. The point it makes is that all of us encounter people from time to time whose obvious integrity has made it seem as though our own lives were standing scrutiny; people whose presence makes us aware that all the assumptions by which we live are called to account.

This was the basic issue in the incident which occurred when Jesus was in the country of the Gadarenes. While making His way toward their city, Matthew tells us, He came upon two men who had been banished from society because of their illness, and were compelled to find shelter among the tombs. The men rushed at Him, for they were fierce in their hatred. But Jesus healed them, and instructed them to return to their homes. The word got around very quickly, and then a strange thing happened. "All the city came out to meet Jesus; and when they saw Him, they begged Him to leave their neighborhood." It wasn't merely the loss of the pigs, a

ne story would have us think at first lance. It was a deeper issue! Here, in ne presence of the Christ, they were nfronted with eternal matters. ore important than "business as sual," they saw human need lifted p and exalted. Deeper than their wn interests, they saw God's inter- st and it made them nervous.

This is the issue we face today: hrist and the content of our lives; hrist and the nature of our thoughts; hrist and eternity. This is not a mforting sermon. I am not comfort- ble in preaching it. Yet it must be id, for as long as Christ is abroad the world, our lives as they are ust ultimately stand face to face ith what they ought to be. This ads me, then, to ask some questions bout our modern way of living.

II

Move, for example, into the area f the use of our time. "Time," said he Greek philosopher Theophrastus, is the most valuable thing a man an spend." I have no quarrel with hat. But is it not of deeper import o ask how a man spends that time? t is an interesting fact that when a erson is facing death, his remaining me does not loom nearly so impor- ant as how he has spent that which already past. Chaplain Henry Ger- cke of the United States Army re- orts that in the final weeks preced- ng their execution for war crimes, many of the German prisoners strug- gled with this fact. Field Marshal Keitel, Hitler's pet general, spent the major portion of his time reading his Bible. On the occasion of their first meeting, Keitel said, "I know from his book that God can love a sinner like me." And Gerecke reports that in the times of prayer which they shared, Keitel spoke penitently of his many sins and pleaded for mercy by reason of Christ's sacrifice for him. It was true as well of Joachim von Ribbentrop, the master diplomat. Gerecke reports that one of his "most heartening experiences was observing the slow but steady progress of . . . the diplomat from cool indifference to a truly sincere Christian faith." At first his attitude was skeptical. But then he began asking questions; "he became more and more penitent, eager to turn from the past." And on the night he was executed, it was to put all his trust in Christ through prayer. "I do not recall all of von Ribbentrop's final statement," says the chaplain, "but it ended, 'God have mercy on my soul.'" When men are facing death, the past suddenly has great bearing on the future.

But turn this around and look at it from the other side. When the accounting comes, it is not merely that which you have included in your life that counts; but that which you have left out. Several years ago an editorial in the **New York Times** mentioned a man who, having reached his 80th birthday, decided to find out just how he had spent his life. He had kept a very complete and detailed diary, and as he looked at his life objectively and statistically, he figured he had spent 26 years, 312 days in sleeping, and 21 years, 85 days at work. Anger and irritation consumed 5 years, 346 days; five years and 302 days were spent in waiting for people who were late for appointments; and 5 years and 346 days eating meals. Here are some other items: shaving took 228 days, signing his name 42 days; scolding his children 26 days. Other time, carefully itemized, was spent in dressing, looking for lost articles, lighting cigars and cigarettes, etc. In all the 80 years, incidentally, he found that laughing had occupied an amount of time equal to only one day and 22 hours.

Now your reaction may well be, "How can anyone be so concerned

about trifling matters that he would keep such a diary in order to build statistics like that?" But before you cast them aside, look at the omissions. Not one instance is mentioned concerning time spent in helping folk who could not help themselves, or taking comfort to the sorrowing, bringing cheer to the sick, or working in any welfare organization. There is not one word about hours spent in good reading, in listening to good music, in the enjoyment of the beauties of nature. Nor is anything said about silent meditation and prayer, or public worship and the work of the church. How many of us would have to write a similar story if we were to give such an accounting of our lives up to now? You see, something is going to flow into that void. If not things of the spirit, then most certainly things of the material. If not that which builds into the fabric of the world, then surely that which draws out and leaves it poorer. What you leave out of your life determines what flows in.

Therefore, an important question has to be asked of every person who is out to make his fortune but has not time for the things of God; it must be asked of him who says, "I'll make my money now and take care of the religion later." It has to be asked of every person in the church who has talent but will not serve; resources, but will not give. It must be asked of every person whose values are such that he will not invest a part of his life now in the very work of God: "What if Christ were to say to you, 'This night your soul is required of you'?" It matters how we spend our time!

This was a part of the problem with which the Gadarenes were confronted when they stood face to face with Jesus. They had been more interested in pigs than people. It had been "business as usual," and when word came concerning the loss of their herds, "all the city came out to meet Jesus." They came to challenge this foreigner who had upset the status quo. But when they saw him, it was another matter. The basic assumptions by which they had lived now stood in sharp outline against a greater purpose, and in contrast seemed small indeed. It was the difference between the menial and the significant; the temporal and the eternal. They could not evade it. Jesus made them nervous, and "they begged Him to leave their neighborhood."

Now when this happens to you, will you receive Him gladly, or ask Him to go away? It matters how we use our time.

III

Let us move to another area of life: our concern for others. Just before the outbreak of World War I there lived in a little town of Johnson Falls, Virginia, a young woman by the name of Sadie Virginia Smithson. Sadie was an unknown. As she grew to young womanhood, her life was filled with a terrible disappointment — she discovered that she was unacceptable to the local society leaders. Her great ambition was to become a member of the Laurel Literary Society. But her father kept a livery stable and she made clothing for a living, so she was never invited to join. In desperation she hit upon a plan. Since no one in Johnson Falls had been to Europe, she reasoned that if she could make the trip, they would invite her to talk about her tour when she returned, and even invite her to join the ranks of the elite.

She saved, scraped and skimped until she had enough money to make the journey. But unfortunately, she chose the wrong time to go, for World War I broke out and she was

apped in Belgium. An army offi-
r offered to drive her to her ship
order that she could return home.
n the way, however, the driver got
st and they found themselves cross-
g a battlefield. As the car came to a
op, Sadie heard a soldier crying:
Water, please, water." Leaping from
e car, Sadie found water and gave
to the dying soldier. Throughout
e long night, she went from man
man, giving each water, binding
wounds with bandages made from
r skirt, scribbling last messages
m men who would never see home
d loved ones again.

When dawn broke, an ambulance
ove up and a young medical offi-
r shouted to her: "Who are you, and
hat in thunder are you doing here?"
e replied, "I am Sadie Virginia
nithson, and I have been holding
ll back all night." Later, on ship-
ard, when recounting her incredi-
le story, a fellow passenger re-
arked, "Well, the Laurel Society
ill surely be glad enough now to
ave you belong." After a moment
die said: "But you don't under-
and. I've been face to face with
ar, and death, and hell, and God.
ve been born again. Do you think
ny of these things matter now?"
Then what does matter?" asked her
iend. "Nothing," she answered,
nothing but God, and love, and do-
g things for folks." Somehow, God
as His ways of opening our eyes to
e greater values in life. And in time,
He raises a man or woman to meet
very need of His children with con-
rn and loving deed.

Conversely, it might be asked, "Who shall bring His love to bear on the needs of the world if not those who live under the compulsions of Christ?" In the year 404 A.D., Telemachus, a Christian saint, came to Rome to see for himself if it were true that for the sports of lords and ladies human beings killed each other in gladiatorial contests. The rumors he heard were mild compared to the bloody butchery he saw. He restrained himself as long as he could, but before the fourth contest, he jumped into the center of the area, raised his hands, and shouted, "In the name of Jesus Christ stop it!" The crowd was suddenly silent. The leading lord of the day was in no mood to have his sport interrupted, and he rushed toward Telemachus with sword in hand. Telemachus knelt, raised his hand and demanded again, "In the name of Jesus Christ, stop it!" The leading lord ran his sword through the body of the old saint. But in the amphitheater, where Telemachus had been sitting, men murmured, "He was a defenseless old man"; "They did not need to do that"; "Bloody business, this." And they began to leave. Soon the balcony was empty, and in a short time, the entire amphitheatre. All who remained were the leading lord and the saint impaled on the sword. Do you say this was foolish? He lost his life, but the gladiatorial contests were soon discarded.

One of the greatest problems of any age is that of blindness and indifference to the needs of the people. All through history, men have said, "It is no issue," or "I see no need." "You make more of this than is necessary," while in their very midst are rank injustices being worked against God's children which need correction. So is it true today. We say, "This is a free country," but are we sure everyone has the right to vote? Or to buy any home he can afford? Or enter any restaurant, if he has the price? "We have laws against discrimination, — but are we sure that exploitation of a man because of the color of his skin, or the slant of his eyes, or the accent in his voice, has ceased? Everyone has

money these days, but are we sure there are no hungry and ill-clothed where we can help? Whatever the need, are you sure it has been met? A Swiss writer, Muralt, said a searching thing about the English which by no means ought to be limited in its application to them. It is pertinent for us all. "The great cruelty of the English lies in permitting evil rather than in doing it." Is this our guilt? Have we been so concerned about making the Laurel Literary Societies of our day that we need to be born again with our eyes wide open?

This was the problem of the Gadarenes. It had been simpler to ignore the men forced to live in the tombs. They had been fearsome, so people no longer passed that way! But Jesus came that way! And when the people came out to meet him, it was to be confronted, not only with the power of his presence, but the magnitude of their blindness as well. Suddenly they saw the truth: it was not enough to pursue their own ways alone; their brothers had to be considered. It was not enough to leave the problem to others; it was their problem. It was their indifference in contrast to Jesus' love, and it made them nervous. So they "begged him to leave their neighborhood."

Now when this happens to you, will you receive Him gladly or beg Him to go away?

IV

One thing is certain: to banish Christ from your life is to close the door on your own salvation. He came because of God's love for us all. He came because men had not been willing to live as God wanted them to live. He came to show us the way. He stands across the path of every life — holding in His very person the standard to which all of us have been ordained to reach. He extends His hand with all the winsomeness and power of His love for you: "Come and follow, and I will lead you to joys unparalleled." It's not the joy of the smoother path and not the road to glory as the world would define the word, but it is the road to peace because you are doing the Father's will!

Are you willing to rise and meet the challenge? God has given you life; will you have life abundant? God has given you love; will you let it flow into life about you? Studdert Kennedy, great preacher and writer of England a few years ago, used to describe his conception of the Last Judgment in simple terms. He said he felt that God would ask him only one question concerning his life when the time came for accounting. That question would be, "What did you make of it?" Christ comes today to challenge you to make the most of your life by spending it in the world of God and in loving concern for your brother. How will you answer? Will you receive Him gladly, or ask Him to go away?"

RELIGIOUS ANXIETY

Donald Macleod, Princeton Theological Seminary, Princeton, New Jersey

O Lord, in thee do I put my trust; let me never be ashamed. (Moffatt: Never let me be disappointed.)—Psalm 31:1.

George A. Gordon once said, "If nothing were dear to man, and if what is dear were in no danger, there would be no place for anxiety."

When you and I discuss the temper and mood of our day the word anxiety comes most readily to our lips. With W. H. Auden we call this "the

e of anxiety." Alfred Adler goes fur-
er and says, "Anxiety accompanies
individual from earliest childhood
old age and embitters life to a mark-
degree." I think also that most of
would agree with Robert Luccock
nen he wrote, "Anxiety is the most
mmon affliction of our age." In-
ed it is undoubtedly for this reason
at in many of our pulpits there is
continuous crusade against anxiety,
d sermons are dotted with phrases
ch as "destructive anxiety," "dog-
d by anxiety," and "corroding anxi-
." Norman Vincent Peale advises
"Get your anxiety out of your
ud."

The time has come, however, for
as Christian folk to re-examine and
think the nature of all our modern
xieties in order to be sure that we
e not condemning them too widely
handling them too loosely. There
e, for example, types of anxiety
ich can be classified as wholesome
bad according to the things about
ich people are anxious. There are
so degrees of anxiety which point
the need for proper balance so
at all our human exertion doesn't
come paralyzed. As Carl Michal-
n of Drew Seminary reminds us,
othing significant would ever be
complished without the aid of anxi-
y." Our age is in its present sorry
ndition, not because of anxieties
such, but from an over-dose of the
ong kinds of anxiety.

There is one type of anxiety which
s bedevilled our people to an alarm-
g degree, not merely because of its
undance, but because of its real
ture: it is a combination of selfish-
ss and fear. We are filled with anxi-
y about our American way of life;
e like our comforts, our gadgets,
d our ease and we are fearful lest,
e some European countries, these
ings might be swept suddenly away.
r we are so anxious about our racial
premacy in a world where preroga-
tives of leadership appear to be ours,
that we are often resentful of some
backward nation claiming its place
in the sun. Or again, we are anxious
about our scientific and technical
competence and we frown when an-
other country proves to have the edge
over us. And usually this anxiety in-
creases out of all due proportions
until we become petty and peevish
and desperately hard to live with. As
persons we are constantly on the edge
of a breakdown and as a nation we
act by our emotions and soft-pedal
the dictates of common sense.

But there is another type of anxiety
which is entirely different and should
be prized, because it is a blend of
human understanding and concern.
This is the kind of anxiety that is in
exceeding short supply these days
and what is here is insipid and weak.
And this is all the more serious be-
cause this type of anxiety is associat-
ed unavoidably with genuine religion.
Paul Tillich, the great German theo-
logian who is now an American cit-
izen, spent a long evening discussing
religion with a Russian lady. After-
wards he said, "It is astonishing. She
has no 'angst'" (German for "anxi-
ety"). On the one hand we are des-
perately anxious about our well-be-
ing, our pensions, and our security,
but on the other hand we seem quite
unconcerned over our religion except
merely to perpetuate the easy habit
of going to church on Sunday. We
are quite undisturbed by the fact
that our religion lacks alertness, cou-
rage, and decision, and has become
somewhat of a vague uncommitted
benevolence. How different we are
from the Psalmist who was so keenly
sensitive about the integrity of his
religion that he cried out to God, "O
Lord, in thee do I put my trust; never
let me be disappointed."

Now in these words he echoes one
of the deepest concerns of the He-
brew race. They were always ex-

tremely anxious about their religion — its dependability, its integrity, and its endorsement by Jehovah. Again and again the Psalmist or the prophet said with an overtone of anxiety: "How long shall I cry and thou wilt not hear?" "Wherefore hidest thou thy face?" "O Lord, in thee do I put my trust; never let me be disappointed."

And we need not go very far to discover the reason. All around the borders of their little country the Hebrew people had neighbors whose religious paganism was notorious. There were Assyria, Egypt, and Babylonia with their many gods, whose acts of worship were degraded by corrupt, obscene, and licentious practices. All these were next door to Judaism which drew its high and distinctive qualities from belief in one holy God who was love, justice, mercy, and truth; a God who demanded that all who worshipped him should be like him. This was a unique and different religion, blooming like a pure flower in the midst of the muck of pagan religious customs. Is it any wonder that the Psalmist was anxious and apprehensive about his religion? In the face of the disdain and ridicule of the teeming nations around him, he was concerned about his religion lest having served and lived it, he should somehow be let down.

You see where this places you and me with regard to contemporary religion. How do we feel, for instance, about modern Christianity? Are we concerned about its quality or whether what we possess is really the Christian faith? Are many of us ever so deeply anxious about our faith that we cry out, "O Lord, I have trusted in thee; let me never be disappointed"? Or, is it more appropriate to ask, whether we are simply active regarding Christianity and not sufficiently anxious? These questions probe into the very integrity of our Christianity and what we do about them will indicate the quality of our concern.

I

We must be concerned about the **depth of our religion.**

Studdert-Kennedy once said that for the average man-in-the-street in England, religion was a curious mixture of Ladies' Aid Societies, Jonah and the whale, and the Archbishop of Canterbury's salary of 7,500 pounds a year. We smile at this but does religion have any more vivid reality for the average American today? Or what is more serious, does he appear to care? To one group Christianity is very useful, but only because it makes one feel better; church-going is a commendable habit and provides a wonderful opportunity to relax; prayer rids a person of tensions that otherwise might spoil his chances of getting to the top. To another group Christianity is one among life's options, and therefore it is quite all right to manipulate it in order not to interfere with self-interest, social conventions, and the stifling tendency to conform to what everybody else is doing. What is lamentable, however, is that we rarely become anxious or apprehensive about this state of our religion. Bliss Carmen put it this way:

> They're praising God on Sunday.
> They'll be all right on Monday.
> It's just a little habit they've acquired.

But this is not real Christianity. This is superficial. It has no depth. The real business of Christianity is to make bad men good. And in order to do this, it gets down into the secret recesses of our moral nature and confronts the forces that make us what we are. It tells of something which God once did for men and of what he has yet to do in and for

u and me. Through the presentation of the saving power of the living rist, it seeks to transform ordinary en and women and create among em a conscience that rebels against ong and wills the good for his ole creation. Donald Baillie was tting to the heart of the matter en he asked: "How long are you ing to play at religion? It is too g a thing to play at. The Bible does t talk about religion, but about d: God's will, God's law, God's e, God's forgiveness, God's ways th men. And what is religion but coming aware of all that and letg it govern our lives?" Here is nuine anxiety. And unless our ristian faith has depth such as t, you and I should be filled with ep concern.

II

We must be concerned about the **rection of our religion.**

Lord Melbourne was Queen Vicia's first Prime Minister. One day, he was coming out of church, he s heard to murmur, "Religion is all ry well, but it's getting a bit too when it claims to interfere with man's private life."

This point of view we deplore, but e we equally concerned about the posite state of affairs? A private ligion that has depth but no direcu. All the religious hermits did not e in the Middle Ages. Our churchtoday have a good share of them. d they are like dynamos that have en disconnected from the machines y were intended to operate. Our ncern should not be merely that ere ought to be more Christians, t that so much of our Christianity static, dormant, and latent energy. e take justifiable pride in the health d vigor of the churches in America day, but are we anxious about the t that our religious enthusiasm is t pitted against corruption and instice in public life? Last year, after the Billy Graham campaign in New York City, 56,000 decisions for Christ had been recorded. Now I do not question the sincerity of these decisions, nor is it my business to do so, but I am concerned over the sobering observation made by George Dugan, religious news editor of the "New York Times," when he said, "[The Billy Graham Campaign] had little lasting impact upon the city." It is our concern to ask questions about the direction of this redemptive enthusiasm out into the world.

Look at history. Twelve men in an upper room had an experience of the Holy Spirit and when they directed it towards the world of their time it became, as Harry Emerson Fosdick said, "a crusade to turn the world upside down." Take another look at history. In the little Aldersgate mission hall on May 24, 1738, John Wesley "felt his heart strangely warmed" and with the depth and reality of this experience he gave the nation a new conscience that moved John Howard to crusade against the wretched condition of England's jails; Robert Raikes to organize Sunday Schools for juvenile gangs; William Wilberforce to stir up the House of Commons against the unholy slave traffic; William Carey to bring the Gospel to India. Coincidence, some of you will say? Perhaps, in certain elements, but basically it was the result of Wesley's deep concern that the dynamic of this faith be directed to the areas of human agony and tears. Indeed ever since the Man of Nazareth said "Ye are my witnesses," his followers have felt they were on urgent business on behalf of souls in sorry need.

III

We must be concerned about the **demand of our religion.**

In Dostoievsky's great novel, "The Brothers Karamazov," Dmitri is on trial for his crime, and the prosecutor said, "He can be carried off his feet

by noble ideals, if they need not be paid for."

And this brings us to one of the chief reasons why many thoughtful people are anxious about the modern upsurge of interest in religion. They are aware of what Dr. Fosdick called "the wretched bargain hunters in religion who want to keep the comforts of the Gospel and avoid its sacrifices." Too many modern folk are saying, "Lord, I trust in thee, but never let it cost me anything." But the Psalmist cried, "O Lord, I trust in thee; never let me be disappointed." And Jesus said, "I have a baptism to undergo. How I am distressed until it is all over!" He had the right anxiety. It came from the realization that the religion of his own people would avail nothing until there was burned into it the imprint of a Cross and until his soul answered its fierce demand. And our modern religion will be useless before the challenge of this hour as long as people remain unconcerned about the depth, direction, and demand that are required.

Charles Kingsley, speaking of the members of the Church, said: "The man who does not change his religion with his Sunday clothes, but carries the thought of God with him till it permeates every duty and detail of his life, that man is a living Gospel."

Is your religion equal to that? If not, you should be anxious about it.

ON OVERCOMING THE BLUES

Clarence J. Forsberg, First Methodist Church, Eugene, Oregon

I want to discuss one of the common personality problems of our time, one which we call "the blues." It has, of course, more scientific and technical names, such as depression or melancholia. But I think that if I just refer to it as "the blues," everyone will know what I am talking about.

This ailment occurs as frequently in the emotional realm as the common cold does in the physical realm. In some ways, there is a great similarity about the two. We know quite a bit about them, and yet they are equally hard to shake off or to avoid. Most of the time they are not serious in nature, or fatal; on the other hand, they can drag us down and rob life of its joy and its vitality. Moreover, there are some practical, common sense things that we can do when they overtake us.

There is nothing new about the blues. In the forty-second Psalm the writer is "singing the blues." Listen to these words: "My tears have been my meat, day and night . . ." Or again, "O my God, my soul is cast down within me . . . all thy waves and thy billows are gone over me. Why art thou cast down, O my soul; and why are thou disquieted within me?"

I think that Dr. Harry Overstreet has the best description that I know of someone who is suffering from a typical case of the blues: "Mr. X comes home on a particular night, hangs his hat on the hatrack with a sigh. His face is gloomy. That he is not always gloomy is evidenced by the fact that his children run to meet him. But this night he kisses them perfunctorily. "Don't bother me now," he says. He greets his wife with a colorless 'hello.' He takes his place at the table with a creased brow and a lustreless eye. He has no lift, no encouraging glance for anyone. His wife, noting that the mood is on him, serves him quickly and quietly, hushing signs of disorder among the children. She has learned by experience not to ask the worried question, 'John, dear, aren't you feeling well tonight?' The microdepressive does not like to be asked that ques-

n. He will glower. Best let him one. Meanwhile, the corners of his outh sag; his shoulders sag; everying about him sags. After dinner he ll slump into his armchair, smoke igar and bury himself in his newsper. If he says anything at all, it ay be a few sharp words about the st of living, or the generally unsatactory condition of the house or the ildren.

"X, as you know, will recover from depression and be properly hamed of himself. To make up for gloominess, he will probably for time, be kinder to his wife and chilen. But the black mood will be on n again, and yet again. The wife ll sigh; the children will vaguely onder what is the matter with dad; d dad will himself not really know hat is the matter."

I want to speak to all of the Mr. s in our congregation. If there is meone who has never known this ood, then this sermon will not inrest him. But if the ancient words the Psalmist, or the modern desription by the psychologist, strike y responsive chords in your mind, en you may be interested in three mple rules that I think might be lpful.

In the first place, I think it would helpful if only we could rememr that life is always a matter of ups d downs.

Life is always a matter of high aces and low valleys; and very few us are ever going to find it like a t plateau. Sometimes we have the staken concept that Christians are ways to be on top of the world, d that they ought not have any oments of doubt or anxiety or conrn. But we are wrong in this, beuse even for Christians the pattern lds true; life is made of ups and owns.

As a minister, it is both my privge and my duty to do a certain amount of pre-marital counseling. Often it seems to me that people who are about to be married are unusually blind to the possibility of any future disagreement, or to the possibility of anything undesirable in the other partner. They seem almost shocked that a minister should even suggest the possibility of friction or conflict in the days ahead. Yet, marriage is always a matter of ups and downs, and those who can recognize this prior to the marriage are the ones who in the long run will be best prepared to meet those emergencies that come along in every life.

I heard the other day about a tribe in Africa which has a peculiar wedding ceremony. "The wedding ceremony takes all day. Sometime during the day it is the custom for the bride to rise up and break into a fury of temper against the man she is marrying. She screams in great rage, and denounces the groom with every vile word she can think of. He is a mass of rottenness, she shouts. He is the ugliest man she has ever seen. He is mean and selfish. His mother should have choked him when he was a babe in arms. It makes her sick to look at him, she says. She wonders why any sensible girl would ever marry such a lump of stupidity. The strange thing is that this outburst is all in good order, and part of the ceremony. It is the custom of the tribe. After the marriage, the wife is not supposed to talk back or to act mean toward her husband. Therefore, she is given a chance to get it all out of her system before the marriage begins!"

Well, I am not so sure that it is any more unhealthy or unrealistic than our own attitude, which says that before a marriage you may see no fault with the other party, but that afterwards you are perfectly at liberty to dwell on everything that is wrong. I shall never forget one of the first counseling experiences of my min-

istry, when a young couple came to see me about getting a divorce.

Being very young, and quite naive about counseling techniques, it seemed to me that the thing to do was to be specific and get the grievances out into the open where we could all assess them, and see them clearly. I wanted to know what the particular reasons were why they could not go on living together. Finally, we succeeded in getting down to cases. Her chief problem was that in the morning, he woud refuse to get up when the alarm clock went off. She would have to struggle with him to get him up and off to work in time. When he finally got to the point where he could be specific, the only thing he could think of was that she liked to make big batches of brownies, and that she always made too many and then expected him to eat them. Neither one of them saw anything humorous about their complaints.

Well, marriage is more than moonlight and roses. It is also a matter of alarm clocks and brownies. It is a matter of making adjustments to all the things that might come along, including sickness, and hard luck, and unemployment, and so on. Those persons who go into marriage with that realization are the ones who in the long run are going to be able to weather the storms of matrimony.

Now the same thing is true about life. The man who comes to it with realism and honesty, and who will recognize that it has its ups and downs, is the man who in the long run is going to be better equipped to handle it from an emotional point of view. The "downs" of life will not catch him by surprise or unprepared, and he will know that life is fair, and that there are better times coming just as there have been better times in the past. He will learn to be grateful for life's blessings, and to anticipate those yet to come.

If only we could recognize that w are not alone in experiencing the up and downs of life, but that this is com mon to all of us. I hope that you wi not feel it irreverent of me to sugges that even Jesus knew somethin about depression. Do you remembe how he said on one occasion, "(faithless and perverse generatio how long must I tarry with you?" D you remember yet another occasio when he turned to one of his favorit disciples and said, "Get thee behin me, Satan?" Surely you have not fo gotten that hour when his swea drops were like blood, and he prayec "If it be possible, let this cup pas from me." Jesus had his own ups an downs, and his life was not alway on an even keel. He, too, had his va leys to slog through, nestled betwee the high mountain peaks of inspira tion.

This is the first thing to be said fo those who want to know how to ove come the blues: it helps to know be forehand that life is a matter of up and downs.

II

Now the second thing I want t say is that all of us are responsibl for the way in which we react t life's blows and disappointments.

In other words, we need to re cognize that even more importar than what happens to us is the wa in which we respond to what hap pens. The real source of our blue is more often within ourselves tha from without.

One of the favorite tricks of pe sonality is to project responsibility fc everything that goes wrong to som one or something outside of ourselve How often a counselor hears thos two words, "If only . . ." One perso will say, "If only my parents had ha more money." The next person say "If only my parents had had le money." "If only I had taken a diffe ent course in school." "If only I ha

oetter teacher." "If only I had got- a better job." "If only I had mar- d a different person." Always, you , there is something wrong with 's circumstances, and so seldom we honest enough to look inside ourselves to find the cause of our appointments.

Have you ever noticed how two rsons can face the identical situa- n and come up with completely ferent reactions. My son, for exam- , thinks that a railroad yard is the rest thing to heaven on earth. He ld stay there by the hour, listen- to the switch engines back and rt, and enjoying that noise that is culiar to a railroad. As a matter of t, when he was even smaller some- e gave him a phonograph record h no music and no words, just rail- d sounds. Fortunately it was soon ken, and never replaced, but it s tops on his hit parade as long it was in one piece.

But there are some people who do share his enthusiasm for railroad nds. Time Magazine once reprint- a letter of complaint to one of the jor railroad companies in our coun- It was a letter written by a man o didn't like railroad sounds, and went like this: "Gentlemen: Why t that your switch engine has to g and dong and fizz and spit and ng and hiss and pant and grate and nd and puff and bump and chug hoot and toot and whistle and eeze and jar and jark and howl and rl and puff and growl and thump boom and clash and jolt and eech and snort and slam and throb roar and rattle and yell and oke and smell and shriek all night g?" Well, that man and my little were listening to the same nds, and to the boy they were sic while to the man they were llam and irritation.

The same thing is true of life. Two rsons face the same set of circum-stances, and yet have completely different reactions. A well meaning friend said to one who was ill, "Affliction does so color life, doesn't it?" "Yes," the person who was ill responded, "but thank God, I can choose the color." You and I can choose the way in which we react to life's blows and disappointments.

Many of you know the name of Dr. Leeslie Weatherhead, the famous Methodist preacher and author of England. Not many of us know, however, that he had a sister who was very close to him, and who died of cancer in a London hospital. Just a few hours before her death, she wrote this prayer: "Father, I do not ask to be saved from trouble. I know that thou wilt let nothing come upon me beyond what, in thy strength, I can bear. But I ask that in every new experience I may know that thou art with me, and that I may not miss the gift hidden in the heart of every pain. Thou hast cast my lot in this strange, hard time. Teach me to bring others of thy needy children the comforts of thy love." Weatherhead records the prayer in one of his books, and then goes on to say, "She did bring the comfort of God's love to the other three people who were in that corner of the ward with her, and you should hear what the nurses said about her. Was that bad luck? Not for her. A few hours after she wrote the prayer, the whole experience had become a shining asset and an everlasting wealth."

This is the second thing we need to remember: how we respond to life's crises is far more important than that which happens to us.

III

Now the third thing I would suggest is that we develop a new appreciation in the future tense.

The 42nd and the 43rd Psalms really belong together. They are one piece of writing, although some later

editor has separated them. In these two Psalms the writer is "singing the blues," as I indicated earlier. He is in a strange place, far away from his beloved Temple. He is among enemies who taunt him with the question, "Where is now thy God." But he does not remain discouraged, and the answer for him lies in a passage which occurs three times in the two Psalms. He says, not once but three times, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul; hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise Him, who is the health of my countenance and my God." It is as though he is trying to say that no matter how dark the clouds may be, and how low the spirit, he is willing to rest his case with God, knowing that the time of deliverance will surely come. "For I shall yet praise him!"

Our disappointments are never quite as final as they may seem, if our lives are linked with the great, eternal purposes of God. This is the heart and core of our Christian faith. This is the source of our joy and our security.

Let me share with you still another prayer, this one written by one of the favorite preachers of our time. It went like this, "Dear Lord, this sermon of mine isn't much good, but I've worked honestly on it, and it's the best I can do — at least at the moment. I know that any good that comes from my sermon will be Your doing, and not mine. Please help me so to live that I may become an increasingly uncluttered channel of Your grace. To that end, may I think You thoughts after You, and speak You own word. I love You, and I lov these people, among whom I hav been called. That's that, God. Amen

Now take out the word "sermo from that prayer, and substitute i stead the word "life," and see if does not become a petition that yo and I should pray daily. "Dear Lor this life of mine isn't much good. B I've worked honestly on it, and i the best I can do — at least at th moment. I know that any good th comes from my life will be Your d ing, and not mine." What a gre thing it is, when a man can so rela his own life to the purposes of Go that he realizes that even it's disa pointments are transitory and passin

"Why art thou cast down, O n soul. And why art thou disquiet within me. Hope thou in God, for shall yet praise Him, who is th health of my countenance, and n God."

Well, most of us know somethi firsthand about the blues. Some us succumb more easily than othe Some of us suffer them more severe than others. But almost all of us cognize the mood. We need to member in the dark days that life made up of both peaks and valley We need to remember that more i portant than what happens to us how we respond to it. And we ne the sense of being linked to the gre eternal purposes of God, so that o disappointments are not final, b will be swallowed up in victory.

THE DESCENDING DOVE . . . (Continued from page

made to drink of one Spirit" (I Cor. 12: 13).

Further, the Holy Spirit teaches us all things and brings to our remembrance all that Christ said to us (John 14:26).

We derive comfort from the thought that the Holy Spirit is always near, calling us to greater service. Let us as Christians move into the realm where thought touches thought, affection stimulates affection, and fe ing generates feeling; for the Ho Spirit works in us if we let Hi causing the angels to rejoice. But us move humbly, asking for Divi assistance.

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